

Approaches to Learning

Introduction

The Approaches to Learning domain entails the inclinations, dispositions, attitudes, habits, and styles that reflect the many ways that children involve themselves in learning. This domain is not about what skills children acquire, but rather how children orient themselves to learning a wide range of skills. A child's approaches to learning are regarded as critical for their success and school readiness.

A well-designed, intentional learning environment is one in which adults play a key role in facilitating children's curiosity, exploration, and play and in assessing and building on their strengths, interests, and knowledge. Such learning environments stimulate children to explore, initiate, and problem solve by extending the child's curiosity and encouraging further experimentation, questioning, and reflection. In such an environment, children develop the attitudes and skills needed to succeed in school and to remain active learners through their entire lives.

Although the ways in which children express their approaches to learning may vary according to temperament and cultural contexts, the following goals are essential for success in school and in life: **persistence, initiative and curiosity, creativity and inventiveness, and reasoning and problem solving**. As a result, the **Approaches to Learning** domain is organized into the following strands and related concepts:

Strand 1: Persistence: Perseverance and continued attentiveness indicate a child's ability to retain meaningful information and ideas to use in future activities and situations. By coping with frustration and learning to stay on track, children can overcome obstacles and emerge successful.

Strand 2: Initiative and Curiosity: Curiosity and interest are crucial components of a child's early learning experiences. These traits are established in their sense of inquisitiveness, interest in pursuing new information, keenness for new knowledge, and desire to learn. Moreover, a healthy level of initiative indicates a willingness to take on tasks, participate in learning activities, and take reasonable risks in learning new information.

Strand 3: Creativity and Inventiveness: Creative thinking and inventiveness indicate originality, fluency, flexibility, and children's ability to extend existing knowledge, using imagination and moving beyond conventional thinking into forms and images not present.

Strand 4: Reasoning and Problem-Solving: By developing strong reasoning and problem-solving abilities, a child can extend existing knowledge into new and different situations. Children should be able to absorb, think about, and understand knowledge and information to inform future actions and learning.

Developing better ways to solve problems means that a child can be successful in a variety of arenas, up to and including the workforce in adulthood.



Strand 1: Persistence

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
A1. Observe objects and people for a brief period of time.	Examine a toy, rattle, or face for a brief period of time.	Providing child with opportunities to explore different characteristics of safe objects by looking, mouthing, grasping, etc.
A2. Hold attention of adult.	Smile, babble, and sustain eye-contact with adult. Use certain behaviors (e.g., crying) to get adults' attention.	Responding appropriately to interactions with child through facial expressions and language, using exaggeration. Providing child with consistent responses, environments, and routines.
A3. Pay attention briefly and try to reproduce interesting and pleasurable effects and events.	Grasp, release, re-grasp, and re-release an object. Lift arms up while crying to be picked up and comforted.	Providing child with a safe environment in which to explore a variety of age-appropriate materials. Observing child to understand and support temperament, learning styles, and interests.
A4. Increase the amount of time they persist in repetitive tasks or preferred activities.	Work at building a block structure for a short period of time. Fill a container with small objects and dump them out repeatedly.	Providing several stacking type toys that encourage a child to use a variety of motions such as dumping and stacking. Demonstrating confidence in child by not interrupting or redirecting when child is focused on an activity.
A5. Increase persistence in trying to complete a task after previous attempts have failed, sometimes seeking the help of others.	Try various shapes in a shape-sorting toy until the shape finally fits. Try to start the zipper on coat repeatedly until able to do the task without help.	Noticing and making specific comments about a child's efforts and accomplishments. Being available and responding when child encounters problems, without being intrusive.

Strand 1: Persistence

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
A6. Grow in ability to persist in and complete tasks, activities, projects, and experiences.	<p>Use glue, scissors, paper and objects to create a collage, working on it in a focused manner.</p> <p>Persist in attempt to find missing pieces of a toy or to try something new with the playdough.</p>	<p>Designing projects that take more than one day to complete, such as paper maché or block constructions.</p> <p>Offering child suggestions for overcoming challenges only after he asks for assistance.</p>
A7. Increase persistence in activities despite frustration or disappointment.	<p>Successfully complete a challenging puzzle despite several failed attempts.</p> <p>Spill a cup of juice on the floor, clean it up, and ask for more juice.</p>	<p>Providing adequate time and support for child to complete increasingly complex games or tasks.</p> <p>Commending child for handling frustration or disappointment in socially appropriate ways (e.g., "I like the way you . . ." or "You did a good job of figuring out . . .").</p>
A8. Recognize and solve problems independently through trial and error and by interacting with peers and adults.	<p>Focus on an activity either independently or with a small group of peers.</p> <p>Alter approach to tasks when initial approach does not work (e.g., try different techniques when assembling a shape puzzle).</p>	<p>Facilitating play and activities between child and others.</p> <p>Encouraging child to try new approaches without intervening.</p>
A9. Set goals, develop plans, and complete tasks.	<p>Explain that he is going to build a fort, including with what materials it will be built, and complete plan successfully.</p> <p>Work on building a specific item (boat or truck), though the design may change during the process.</p>	<p>Talking with child about her activities and plans using open-ended questions (e.g., "How did you do that? Tell me more." "What will you do next?" "How will you know when it is finished?").</p> <p>Managing a way for the child to save completed project until a family member arrives to admire it at the end of the day.</p> <p>Providing space and times where child can play or work at tasks without interruptions.</p>
A10. Show growing capacity to maintain concentration over time on a task, question, set of directions or interactions, despite distractions and interruptions.	<p>Disregard activities nearby while maintaining focus and concentration on the task at hand.</p> <p>Remember on a day-to-day basis to maintain long-term projects (e.g., watering seeds regularly, recording daily plant growth on a chart, reading the thermometer and recording temperatures regularly).</p>	<p>Creating projects for child to work on over time (e.g., planting seeds and nurturing them to watch them grow).</p> <p>Providing adequate time and support for child to complete increasingly complex activities, games, or tasks.</p>

Strand 2: Initiative and Curiosity

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
B1. Show awareness of and interest in the environment.	<p>React to new objects, voices, and sounds by becoming either more quiet or more active or changing facial expressions.</p> <p>Turn in the direction of the source of familiar voices and sounds in the environment.</p>	<p>Placing bright toys with bold patterns in baby's visual field and moving them while baby's eyes follow the movement.</p> <p>Talking with and singing to child during routine feedings or diaper changes, naming body parts while dressing the child.</p>
B2. Engage in and actively explore self, objects, and surroundings.	<p>Inspect own hands and feet (e.g., by mouthing).</p> <p>Explore an object using all senses, putting it in the mouth, holding and releasing it, watching while moving it back and forth in front of face, or banging it on the tray of the highchair.</p>	<p>Engaging child in interactive games involving the body (e.g., patty-cake).</p> <p>Providing an infant "gym" with features such as a soft carousel horse rattle, spinning flower, musical butterfly teether, soft mirror, fun rattle and different textures and activities on the mat.</p>
B3. Show eagerness and curiosity as a learner.	<p>Show pleasure by vocalizing and smiling when being read to, or by actively exploring new objects.</p> <p>Show interest in new experiences such as reaching out to touch rain.</p>	<p>Using open-ended questions to promote thinking (e.g., "Where do you think the ball went?")</p> <p>Observe the children and place prompts nearby that facilitate their further explorations.</p> <p>Providing child with choices; by having toys sorted on shelves within reach and by encouraging active exploration; discouraging television or videos.</p>
B4. Demonstrate ability to initiate activities.	<p>Begin to explore the environment independently, first with adult and then venturing further away from the adults.</p> <p>Try new art materials such as finger painting, musical instruments, or other new toys.</p> <p>Drop objects to see if you will engage in the "pick-up game".</p>	<p>Offering art materials and encouraging child to create own designs.</p> <p>Being cooperative and engaging as the "picker-upper."</p>
B5. Participate in an increasing variety of tasks and activities.	<p>Show interest in several learning centers.</p> <p>Notice new materials and express interest in using them.</p>	<p>Encouraging and supporting child's interest in trying new activities by providing toys and materials that match child's emerging skills.</p> <p>Offering variety as well as repetition in stories, games, and activities.</p>

Strand 2: Initiative and Curiosity

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
B6. Develop increased ability to make independent choices.	Choose a book for an adult to read. State choice for preferred activity during play time.	Providing non-critical environments that create opportunities for child to make choices and to initiate activities. Increasing the choices available to the child and asking her to plan what she will do first, next, and last.
B7. Find and use materials to follow through on an idea.	Gather blocks to build a tower. Gather pots, spoons, plates, and plastic vegetables to “make soup.”	Trying new tasks with child and describing them. Reading books about new experiences and whenever possible exposing child to real things mentioned in the books.
B8. Initiate play with others.	Bring a toy to another child. Play beside other children and imitate the play of another child.	Acknowledging when child initiates pro-social activities and point out the positive outcomes. Providing many opportunities for active exploration with other children.
B9. Offer to help with chores.	Help water plants or use a paper towel to clean up spilled juice. Imitate adult activities such as setting the table.	Expressing appreciation for child’s initiative and desire to help. Allowing child to independently set table, clean up toys, hang coat on peg, place work in cubby, etc.
B10. Invent projects and work on them with little assistance.	Use art materials in many ways without waiting to be told what to do. Show interest in patterns such as sorting colored pegs into single-color piles, or putting all the big buttons into one container.	Providing opportunities for child to form, design, and undertake activities and projects. Providing materials of interest including recycled/reused materials such as paper towel rolls for child to create own designs.
B11. Grow in eagerness to learn about and discuss a growing range of topics, ideas and tasks.	Show curiosity by saying things such as, “I wonder what will happen next.” Experiment with objects to see which will sink and which will float.	Modeling prediction-making in daily life (e.g., “Do you think it will rain today?”). Inventing and conducting simple experiments with child (e.g., which object will sink and which will float).

Strand 3: Creativity and Inventiveness

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
C1. Notice and show interest in and excitement with familiar objects, people, and events.	Turn toward and track voices, people, and objects. Mouth, shake, bang, drop, or throw objects.	Providing toys and experiences with a variety of colors, textures, sounds, shapes, and smells. Changing the materials, toys, and objects in child's environment regularly.
C2. Approach and explore new experiences in familiar settings.	React with movement to the sound of music. Explore new toy to see what happens when it is pushed, pulled, punched, dropped, rolled, shaken, or covered with towel.	Encouraging child to pretend, make-believe, and use imagination. Providing a variety of new objects to be pulled, pushed, held, dropped, thrown, patted, and explored using the senses.
C3. Delight in finding new properties and uses for familiar objects and experiences	Put together blocks or plastic manipulatives in many different combinations. View a table from both above and below, and examine the back and sides of a chair. Enjoy sand and water activities under adult supervision.	Creating a safe environment where child is encouraged to experiment with a variety of safe materials. Providing sand and water play, giving child opportunities to pour, fill, scoop, weigh, and dump, under adult supervision. Supporting and encouraging child's creative processes, putting less emphasis on finished products.
C4. Pretend and use imagination during play.	Role play with another child (e.g., pretends to be her parent). Take play dough to the housekeeping area to fill the muffin tins before putting them in the play oven.	Playing with child in creative ways (e.g., using soft toys to create a puppet show). Providing dress-up and pretend play materials from child's daily life and cultural background or books and songs.

Strand 3: Creativity and Inventiveness

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
C5. Imitate action observed in another situation.	<p>Pretend to shave like daddy does or drive a bus the way mommy does.</p> <p>Reenact role of rescue worker after field trip to rescue squad.</p>	<p>Providing props for enacting roles of people seen in the familiar environment (e.g., Daddy, storekeeper, letter carrier).</p>
C6. Approach tasks experimentally, adapting as the activity evolves.	<p>Experiment with the number and sizes of blocks he can stack before they tumble.</p> <p>Experiment with a brush to find ways to keep paint from dripping.</p>	<p>Providing age-appropriate learning centers comprised of many varied and open-ended materials.</p> <p>Providing opportunities for child to experiment with safe art materials and create simple art projects.</p>
C7. Use imagination to create original thoughts, ideas, or products.	<p>Make up words, songs, or stories, or create a dance.</p> <p>Being comfortable answering open-ended questions that have no “right” answer.</p>	<p>Providing space, materials/supplies, time, and freedom for creative expression (e.g., opportunities to dance, paint, build, make music, and invent stories) and by providing opportunities to be spontaneous, silly, and messy in order to experiment with possibilities.</p> <p>Asking child to explain ideas and intent and observing or entering dramatic play (as a support actor) without impeding creativity.</p>
C8. Approach tasks and activities with increased flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness.	<p>Combine activities, materials, and equipment in new ways (e.g., build “tent” by using sheet or blanket around table.)</p> <p>Play several different roles in dramatic play over the course of a week.</p>	<p>Encouraging child to try things this-way-and-that-way to see how they turn out.</p> <p>Providing props, time, space, and freedom to choose activities, offering to play the role of “best supporting actor” to complement and extend child’s play scenarios by incorporating new props or challenging elements to the developing story.</p>

Strand 3: Creativity and Inventiveness

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
C9. Use creativity and inventiveness to complete projects or tasks.	<p>Use a variety of approaches in creating block structures or artistic projects.</p> <p>Do usual things in unusual ways (e.g., help with clean up by collecting toys in a truck and wheeling them to the shelf).</p>	<p>Avoiding evaluating, grading, or judging creative products; avoiding competitions.</p> <p>Using open-ended questions and descriptive language when interacting with child to encourage creative thinking.</p>
C10. Make changes to a familiar story by adding actions or characters.	<p>Change the plot of a familiar story while examining the illustrations in a picture book or play-act a scene from the story.</p>	<p>Asking or engaging with the child to depict how a story may have ended differently (e.g., "What if...").</p>
C11. Represent reality in a variety of ways (e.g., pretend play, drawing, making up stories).	<p>Substitute objects to represent something else during in dramatic play (e.g., use a banana as a telephone or block as a truck).</p> <p>Play-act the role of an admired adult (teacher, crane operator) or favorite fictional character.</p> <p>Use crayons or markers to draw pictures representing the field trip to an apple orchard.</p>	<p>Playing make-believe games with child, including games that introduce the child to diverse people, places, and cultures (e.g., "Can we pretend we are walking through a hot jungle?").</p> <p>Providing opportunities for child to differentiate between make-believe and reality.</p> <p>Providing enjoyable experiences that stimulate the desire to hold on to the memory and "re-present" it.</p>

Strand 4: Reasoning and Problem-Solving

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
D1. Explore object characteristics (e.g., size, shape, texture) in many different ways.	Explore objects placed in hands. Bring objects to mouth.	Adding interesting toys that have different textures and that are responsive to the actions of the infant (e.g., plastic mouthing toys with various shapes/textures and rattles or squeeze toys that make sounds).
D2. Behave in consistent ways to elicit desired response.	Repeat actions many times to cause desired effect (e.g., cry to be held or fed). Enjoy playing games with primary adult that involve repetition (e.g., peek-a-boo).	Interacting with child in consistent and predictable ways. Playfully imitating and responding appropriately to child's sounds or actions.
D3. Use sounds, gestures, and movements to impact the environment and interactions.	Push a ball to watch it roll or pull or hit a knob to make a bell ring. Drop toys from the high chair in a game where the adult is supposed to pick it up repeatedly.	Modeling behaviors that produce interesting results (e.g., making clucking sounds, making interesting facial movements). Providing child with toys and objects that react to specific actions (e.g., sound balls that chime, jingle and crinkle when rolled around).
D4. Realize that people or things exist even when out of view (object permanence).	Say good-bye to parent, knowing he will return later in the day. Search for items that have been covered, placed inside something, or removed to another location in games of "hide-and-seek" with toys.	Playing peek-a-boo. Playing "hide-and-seek" games with objects by covering the object and then moving it under another cover, saying things such as, "Where are those keys?"
D5. Use objects as intended.	"Help" sweep the floor with a child-sized broom. Push buttons on a plastic phone.	Modeling and dramatizing the customary way to use common objects. Providing dramatic play areas for child to explore the functions of common objects.

Strand 4: Reasoning and Problem-Solving

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
D6. Demonstrate beginning understanding of cause and effect, especially of own actions.	<p>Start to ask “why” questions to show effort at understanding causation (e.g., “Where do the stars go in the daytime?”).</p> <p>Says, “Dana cry ‘cause I spilled water on her picture.”</p>	<p>Engaging child in play-based cause and effect experiments (e.g., different colors of paint; water and flour).</p> <p>Using simple stories to help child understand cause and effect (e.g., “Why did Humpty-Dumpty break into pieces?”).</p>
D7. Seek assistance from an adult or another child to solve problems.	<p>Say, “I can do it myself,” as well as know when to ask an adult or another child for help.</p> <p>Seek assistance after trying for a period of time to put together a difficult puzzle.</p>	<p>Encouraging independence while providing assistance when necessary.</p> <p>Guiding child through the problem-solving process without stepping in to do it for the child.</p>
D8. Explain reasons why simple events occur.	<p>Explain that a friend is not here because he was sick the previous day.</p> <p>Attempt to explain how things might change, given changes in circumstances (e.g., “When it is cloudy, it might rain.”).</p>	<p>Engaging child in discussions focused on explaining why events occur.</p> <p>Wondering aloud with child about why things happen.</p>
D9. Develop increasing abilities to classify, compare and contrast objects, events and experiences.	<p>Sort objects and compare the groups formed.</p> <p>Explore and inspect large and small details of objects for similarities and differences.</p> <p>Use comparative words (e.g., “Now the music is faster.”).</p>	<p>Providing objects for sorting (e.g., different shapes), asking child to explain how he sorted.</p> <p>Engaging child to notice similarities and differences in the environment (e.g., different types of vehicles on the road).</p> <p>Using comparative words or phrases naturally in daily conversations (e.g., not the same, different, exactly, match, alike, same, other than, similar, equal, unequal).</p>
D10. Recognize and solve problems through active exploration, and interactions and discussions with others.	<p>Use resources such as books and adults to extend child's observations.</p> <p>Request different materials she has used in the past to help solve problems, explore materials, or express thoughts and ideas.</p>	<p>Providing a learning environment rich in resources and supportive of exploration.</p>

Strand 4: Reasoning and Problem-Solving

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
D11. Create a strategy based on one learning event and extend it to a new learning opportunity.	<p>Learn that mixing red and yellow paint makes orange, and later try to color a yellow crayon over a red crayon.</p> <p>Work out problems mentally due to previous experience (e.g., examine puzzle piece shapes to determine their placement without completing the puzzle through trial and error).</p>	<p>Commenting when child applies knowledge to new situations, using descriptive language.</p> <p>Encouraging child to remember how he solved a problem in the past.</p>
D12. Demonstrate understanding of what others are thinking, their intentions, or motivations.	<p>Explain that a story character has certain feelings because of the facial expression depicted in an illustrated book.</p> <p>Anticipate where another child might be hiding during hide-and-seek.</p> <p>Explain why another child might have taken a toy away.</p>	<p>Reading, discussing, play-acting stories about people, their intentions, their thinking, and their motivations.</p> <p>Playing games that require anticipating what another child will do.</p> <p>Acknowledging the feelings of the victim and then discuss why the child might have taken a toy.</p>
D13. Demonstrate long-term memory of meaningful events and interesting ideas.	<p>Tell others about events that happened in the past.</p> <p>Recall past experiences when planning new activities or setting new goals.</p>	<p>Helping child remember experiences with photographs, souvenirs, and play-acting scenarios related to past events.</p> <p>Creating books or other documentation about child's experiences on a field trip or when a new skill was developed through persistence and effort.</p>
D14. Work with others to find a solution, using problem solving strategies.	<p>Negotiate with other children to solve a problem, usually with assistance.</p> <p>Share thoughts and opinions about a problem in group settings.</p>	<p>Applying problem-solving process to social problems at child's level (e.g., "Enrique and you both want to paint at the easel. What needs to happen for you to share the easel and paint together?").</p> <p>Leading small group discussions to solve problems related to social interactions, science, math, etc., or to plan for a special occasion.</p>